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## THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART.

It was recently suggested by the New York Times that "it would be well if the Museum of Natural History, the Lenox Library, the Historical Society, and other smaller institutions, could look at things in a broad enough light to consider seriously whether their collections of antiques and of foreign art, and of native or aboriginal art were not better loaned or given to a central museum like the Metropolitan (Museum of Art). The question," the writer continues, "is not one of property, but of benefit to the people. As they now are, many a fine little collection lies, year after year, practically unseen in buildings devoted to anything but archæology or art."

No one, we presume, doubts that it would be desirable to collect the art treasures of New York in some one building where they would be more accessible and of more practical value to the public than they are now. But it seems to us that the suggestion that the Metropolitan Museum of Art should be made that depository is singularly unfortunate and ill-timed. The museum's management of its own affairs has certainly not been such as to justify the belief that it can safely be entrusted with the management of the affairs of the kindred institutions mentioned and implied, some of which are personal enterprises, and all of which are better managed than the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The suggestion challenges inquiry as to the methods employed by the trustees of the museum to forward the interests of the public. Let us look at them.

The museum is heavily in debt, the result of unwise expenditures, and appeals to the public for subscriptions—not to wipe off the debt, but to pay a new one unnecessarily incurred almost at the moment of opening the subscription list. Having started the subscription, the trustees close the museum for a year, to reopen it far away from the present convenient site. The appeal for funds naturally is a failure. But the trustees notwithstanding this, and with the full knowledge that they can hardly pay the interest on their present debt, deliberately buy from one of their own associates at the cost of \$35,000 the Avery collection of porcelain. The collection may or may not be worth the money. We will not discuss that now. But it certainly is not needed by the museum, which if it had the means to expend in the direction of ceramics, could for much less money buy a full set of models and examples illustrating the artistic and educational interests in the art of china-making, which would answer the purpose far better and would be of practical value to the public, which the Avery collection assuredly is not. But the trustees buy Mr. Avery's porcelain at his own price, and then obligingly borrow the money to pay him. He has received \$25,000, and \$10,000 is yet to be provided for him.

Such has been the way in which the finances of the museum have been managed from the very beginning. The writer of the New York Times article from which we have quoted, evidently seems to think that it is a very fine thing for the museum to own the Avery collection. He says: "A museum which, at the end of seven years from its foundation, can boast of treasures like the Cesnola collection of antiques from Cyprus, the Avery collection of ceramic ware, and the much criticized, but very useful and instructive collection of paintings from Holland, has done something to be proud of." Yet not one of these purchases, in our opinion, was worth to the museum what was paid for it. Of the Avery collection we have already spoken. The Cesnola collection is undoubtedly of great archæological interest, but the objects, for the most part, are entirely out of place as models in an art museum; for, excepting a few of Greek importation into Cyprus, they are truly Cypriote, the work of rude barbarians who badly imitated the work of the Egyptians, Assyrians and Greeks. Such models must tend rather to discredit the art of the ancients than illustrate what may be best studied from familiarity with the genuine and original art of antiquity. The museum still owes General Di Cesnola the sum of \$17,000 on account of its purchase of these antiquities, and is paying him seven per cent interest on the money in addition to his salary of \$5000 a year as superintendent. It was understood that the debt was to be paid off gradually by the sale of the duplicates in the collection, but inasmuch as duplicates of antique objects are rarely found, the debt and the interest it carries are likely to continue for many years to come. We will not dwell upon the folly of the purchase of "the much criticised but very useful and instructive

paintings from Holland"—for the gentleman who was responsible for it is no longer living—except to remark that it was a precedent of reckless expenditure of trust funds which has been consistently followed by the present trustees.

There is one other point in The Times article which calls for comment. The writer says: "The Castellani collection was offered to the museum and so were the Tanagra statuettes. Perhaps in neither of these cases would it have been possible to bring the owners to reasonable figures, but had it been possible no money would have been forthcoming." It was clearly out of the question for the museum to have bought the Castellani collection, with incurring further debt. But the case of the Tanagra statuettes was different. Those interesting antiques would doubtless have become the property of the museum but for the omission of General Di Cesnola to bring the subject of their acquisition before the board of trustees. A private individual was ready to raise the money to buy them—the price asked was \$1500—and give them to the museum, but Mr. Fenardent, their owner, after waiting in vain for the board to take action in the matter, finally sold them at an advanced price to Mr. Appleton, of Boston, who presented them to the art museum of that city.

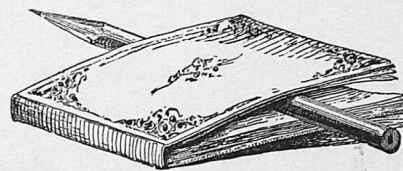
We trust that the day may come when the collections of the various art museums of New York will be gathered under one roof, with the affairs of the institution administered by a liberal and prudent management; and we hope that when that day comes that the trustees of the Metropolitan Museum of Art may have so won the confidence of the public that they may be deemed worthy of being the custodians of these scattered treasures. At the present time, however, it will strike our readers, we think, that the trustees of the museum would do well to take steps for improving the management of their present charge before thinking of undertaking further responsibilities.

## AN ART ADVISORY BUREAU.

OUR plan set forth in the first number of THE ART AMATEUR, to act as art adviser to persons wishing to purchase pictures or bric-à-brac, but not sufficiently versed in art matters to trust wholly to their own judgment, is to be adopted, we see, with some modifications by the conductors of the art department of Scribner's Monthly. It is proposed to "consider all wants that are intelligently expressed, carefully and conscientiously canvass and record all values, give letters of advice and counsel, send photographs of any desired picture, and transact all the business for a consideration which shall simply cover expenses, such expenses always being expressed or covered by the round price of any picture in question." We may say with our contemporary, that "our patrons ought to know by this time that the men who preside over the art department of this magazine understand their business, and are quite competent to undertake and manage efficiently the enterprise we propose." It has always seemed to us eminently proper for the editor of an art journal, having the confidence of his readers, to act as adviser of those readers in their art purchases, and we are pleased to find our contemporary is of that opinion. Although Scribner's Monthly is not, strictly speaking, an art publication, the conductors of its art department doubtless possess the special knowledge fitting them for their new undertaking.

THE "Report on Art Schools" by Mr. Frank Waller, secretary of the Art Students' League of New York, has a value beyond its interest to members of the League. It will be welcomed by American art students generally as containing useful information much sought for but hitherto inaccessible. Mr. Waller gives briefly the result of his observations in London, Edinburgh, Dublin, and Paris, with extracts from the reports of the head-master of the South Kensington Schools, relative to the management and instruction in the principal Continental schools. He cites at length the advantages to students offered by the New York Academy of Design, the Yale School of Fine Arts, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and the Art Students' League. After admitting the disadvantages under which the League labors in common with other American art schools, from want of "the conveniences and ammunition of study," generally bountifully supplied by government in European art schools, his conclusions are highly favorable

to the management of the institution with which he is connected, of which he speaks with just pride as, so far as he knows, "the only example in existence of an art school that has many of the classes and functions of a first-class academy, which, from its outset, has been supported entirely by the students themselves." He adds: "our surplus of \$1800 over and above all expenses last year proves that the Art Students' League may have, even without private munificence or government support, a future of influence far-reaching in its results. Much more may be done if private individuals, who think such an institution worth supporting, would endow it or subscribe to the fund already started." We have on a previous occasion expressed our admiration of the earnestness and vitality which characterize the management of this school, and we cordially hope that private munificence may not be slow in recognizing the merit of the League, nor withhold a helping hand to the plucky band of art students who show so well their ability to help themselves.



## My Note Book.



ERILY it would seem as if the good time for American artists that has been so long coming has come at last. Most of those of my acquaintance are "rushed" with orders, and the prices realized for American pictures at recent art sales have certainly been encouraging. "Greta,"

on another page, writes from Boston concerning the remarkable success of the sale of the Hunt pictures and sketches. At the Artists' Fund Sale in New York, \$17,952 was obtained for a hundred and one paintings, which is some \$5600 more than the ninety-nine pictures of last year brought. Mr. George N. Curtis paid \$1120 for Eastman Johnson's "A Glass with the Squire." Messrs. Fischel, Adler & Co. paid \$785 for J. G. Brown's "The Three (scape) Graces." Messrs. Knoedler & Co., on this occasion, descended from their high position of having nothing to do with American paintings, and competed for the possession of the last-named picture. A. F. Tait's "A Surprise" brought \$500; George H. Story's "Getting Ready for Church," \$350; H. Humphrey Moore's charming little "L'Amateur," \$304.50; David Johnson's "Brook at Byfield," \$425; and J. C. Wiggins' "Cattle by the Sea," \$410. The pecuniary success of the water-color exhibition was beyond question.

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THE prices obtained for good foreign pictures at recent auctions have also been liberal, although importers who hold at fabulous prices pictures of no greater merit than those thus sold in open market may not think so. At the sale of the Nathan Collection, Bouguereau's "Crossing the Stream" was sold for \$6600, to Mr. Lyall, a Brooklyn tobacco manufacturer; and "Mother and Child," by the same artist, was knocked down for \$2900. Meyer Von Bremen's "The Lesson" brought \$2100; Zamacois' "Rivals," \$4550; Beranger's "The Rising Artist," \$850; Stammel's "Money-Lender," \$625; Goupil's "Ready for the Promenade," \$600; Hüblin's "Reflection," \$1000; and Escosura's "Soldiers Playing Cards," \$600. Nearly \$40,000 in all was realized by the sale.

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THE chief interest in the sale of the "Munich Collection" of paintings at Kirby's rooms centred in the fine work entitled "A Venetian Scene," attributed to Turner. It was sold for \$950 to a well-known connoisseur, but there seems to have been some misunderstanding as to the terms of the purchase, and the picture has not yet been delivered. Tissot's "Ready for the Promenade" and Hamilton's excellent marine were withdrawn, there being a reserve price of \$950 on the one and \$500 on the other, and no one could be



found to start them at those figures. Van der Venne's "Proscribed Race" sold for \$700. Hugo Salmson's "January and May," owned by Mr. S. P. Avery, withdrawn previously at an upset price of \$1000, was knocked down for \$275. Of course it was bid in.

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BY the death of Mr. James Lenox, founder of the Lenox Library, New York loses one of the most public-spirited of her citizens. The value of the splendid art collection with which his name will be permanently associated cannot easily be overestimated as a means for improving the æsthetic taste of the community.

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AND what Mr. Lenox was to New York, Mr. Corcoran long has been to Washington. The Corcoran Art Gallery has indeed a national reputation. It has undoubtedly one of the finest private collections in the country, of modern masterpieces in painting and sculpture. Amateurs and students daily resort there in such numbers to study and copy, that it has become necessary to devise means to increase the present limited facilities, and Mr. Corcoran recently decided to build an annex for extra exhibition galleries, a lecture hall, and rooms for a school of design.

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SUCH is the munificence of this public-spirited gentleman. But what shall be said of the man who from mere greed stands in his way to hinder him from carrying out his plans? Rear-Admiral S. P. Lee is the person who enjoys this unenviable distinction. Three lots of land are needed to extend the gallery. Mr. Corcoran owns two of these; Rear-Admiral Lee owns the third, which happens to lie between the other two, and he persistently refuses to accept for it any reasonable offer. It was proposed to him to have it valued by three real-estate agents of his own selection, and that he should receive above the amount of valuation an additional twenty per cent as a bonus. He will not listen to the proposal, and expresses his intention to keep the lot as a speculation. So Mr. Corcoran is thwarted in his desire to give to Washington a school of design. Mrs. Ogle Taylor, a venerable public-spirited lady of fortune, who has hoped before her death to place her splendid collection of paintings, antiques, and china in the Corcoran Gallery, is also disappointed in her public benefaction, through the contemptible churlishness of Rear-Admiral S. P. Lee.

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ACCORDING to the new regulations of the National Academy of Design, which will open on the 30th inst., the critics are not to be admitted on "varnishing day." The critics will be able to stand this, I think. But artists residing out of the city who are required by another regulation to incur the expense of sending their pictures to a consignee to be unpacked and forwarded to the building, instead of sending them as usual directly to the Academy, I think have reason to complain.

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MR. GEORGE H. STORY has an important commission from Colonel Richard Lathers, of Winyah Park, New Rochelle, N. Y., for whom he is painting a view of the stately suite of rooms opening from the library on the ground floor of the mansion. The vista affords an uninterrupted sweep of a hundred feet, which will give the artist the opportunity for a good effect.

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IT is hoped that the execution of the proposed statue of Washington in Wall Street will be given to a sculptor of established reputation. I should be sorry to say any thing that might deprive a humble disciple of Phidias of needed dollars; but it is really time that a stop was put to intrusting important commissions of this kind to the incompetent hands into which they generally fall. The public statues of New York are a disgrace to a great city.

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SCRIBNER'S MONTHLY for March is more than usually strong in its illustrations. "The Tile Club Afloat," by Messrs. W. McKay Laffan and Edward Strahan, is a pleasant companion to "The Tile Club at Play," which appeared in the same magazine some months ago. All the tilers except Mr. Strahan contribute to the illustrations, which, for the most part, are excellent. Sarony, the latest member of the club, does some of the best work. Richard Whiteing's article on

"Cham" is interesting, and is fully and effectively illustrated by reduced facsimiles of that clever caricaturist's published drawings.

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So poor old Brumidi, the industrious fresco-painter of the National Capitol, is dead. He was not a great artist, but his frescos were more than respectable. His works cover in surface hundreds of square feet. For twenty-five years he passed many hours a day on dangerous scaffoldings. In the Senate wing of the Capitol there is hardly a blank space, for his decorations nearly entirely cover the walls. His best work, perhaps, is in the rooms of the House Committee on Agriculture, and of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs. On the dome of the Capitol is his "Apotheosis of Washington," a gigantic picture of little merit. The composition upon which he was engaged, when he met with the accident last summer which has hastened his death, was a huge allegorical fresco belt, in black and white, around the lower portion of the dome; it was to illustrate the history of the country. It is only about one fourth finished, but Brumidi left the designs for its completion.

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No one grudged the old gentleman the ten dollars a day he received for his work, which certainly is superior in its way to many pretentious canvases in the Capitol for which the nation has paid roundly. But does it not seem a pity that such an important commission should have been intrusted to an inferior artist, and a foreigner at that, when we think of what some American Inigo Jones, Barry, or Hogarth might have made of it? At present, it is true, we do not happen to have among us an Inigo Jones, a Barry, or a Hogarth to give us such mural paintings as those at Greenwich Hospital and the Adelphi and the Foundling in London—the two latter were painted for nothing. But the blank spaces on the Capitol walls and ceilings were left blank so long that surely it would have done no harm to have let them remain so a little longer.

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THE Metropolitan Museum of Art has taken a practical step in opening its industrial art school in Union Square, and much credit is due to the private individual through whose generosity this step has been made possible. The first class organized is for instruction in the art of design as applied to working in wood, and a promising band of young artisans is already earnestly at work. Every first-class cabinet-maker should encourage his apprentices to avail themselves of the opportunity for improvement thus afforded them.

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AT the American Art Gallery's Spring Exhibition there are, besides many new pictures, several familiar ones of strong interest. Prominent among them is "Conway Castle," the splendid Turner discovered in New Jersey by Mr. Thomas Moran. I suppose that there can be no reasonable doubt as to the authenticity of this work. It is well preserved, although age has dulled its brilliancy, perhaps, more than it would have done had Turner been as careful as most great artists are to use only such pigments as will keep their color. Persons who only know Turner by his broadly painted "Slave Ship" will be agreeably surprised to find his "Conway Castle" wholly free from that vagueness and exaggeration which make it incomprehensible to many. This work was evidently painted in the artist's healthier days, before his passion for color subordinated to it almost every other requisite in a picture.

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E. H. BLASHFIELD'S large historical painting of "The Emperor Commodus as Hercules Leaving the Amphitheatre at the Head of his Gladiators," exhibited at the Salon last year, occupies the place of honor on the south wall. Constant Mayer's pathetic "Song of the Shirt" will be viewed with interest by many who have not seen it before, as well as those to whom it is well known. George Fuller's "Romany Girl," which attracted much favorable notice at the last Academy exhibition, is to be seen, together with a new work of the same artist representing an infirm old woman gathering simples. The latter, which is painted in a very low key, is weird in the extreme, and full of poetry. S. J. Guy's large painting, "The Mother's Supplication," bought by Mr. R. E. Moore at the Hart-Sherwood sale, occupies a prominent place. There is a characteristic picture of the

same artist entitled "The Good Brother," a companion to "The Good Sister," in the Marshall O. Roberts collection. It is striking in color and pretty in sentiment, but, like most of Mr. Guy's work, it is over-finished and lacks spirit. J. G. Brown produces another of his jolly, clean-faced urchins. This one is being snow-balled, and seems to like it. Of Mr. Brown it may be said that if his pictures lack sentiment they are never without spirit. Thomas Eakins, of Philadelphia, sends an admirable little painting representing two chess-players, which, if I am not mistaken, was in the Centennial Exhibition. Sartain is well represented by his admirably-painted "Moorish Sheik," S. R. Gifford by his "Tappan Zee," Bunner by his effective "Fishing Boats in the Scheldt," C. C. Coleman by several paintings, including his "Reading Monk," Wordsworth Thompson by his clever "Lake Maggiore," one of his best works, and Thomas Moran by a little landscape with an admirable effect of light produced by a rift in a cloudy sky. Edward Moran sends a marine, Inness some of his best landscapes, and Miss N. S. Jacobs, who, by the way, is making rapid improvement, has a strongly-modelled portrait of a lady.

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A LARGE collection of foreign water-color drawings, nearly every one with an imposing name attached to it, was recently sold at auction in New York. The sale was not a success. The fact that the genuineness of many of the drawings was freely questioned, together with the fact that a dealer who had much to do in putting them on the market, has been well and not too favorably known many years among New York artists and picture buyers, made connoisseurs very cautious how they bought.

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THE little drawing attributed to Turner and bearing what apparently was intended to pass for his signature might have been his work when a lad in his father's barber shop in London; but is it not odd that the signature should appear on the mat of such a passe-partout as could not have been known in Turner's time? The names of Samuel Prout, Stanfield, David Cox, Copley, Fielding, and Birket Foster were signed to works some of which would barely reflect credit upon the endeavors of a school-girl. The Spanish and Italian drawings bore the names of Fortuny, Zamacois, Vibert, Jimenez, Peralta, Alvarez, Maccari, and others. Perhaps they were from the pencils of those artists—although it is unusual for such men to sign such rough, unfinished sketches as many of these were—but if they really were what they were claimed to be, young American artists should learn a lesson of encouragement from the fact, for they need never despair of improvement when they see what very bad work some of these very famous men were once guilty of. Fortuny was long in disfavor with the critics, and achieved his fame somewhat suddenly. At one time he made a radical change in his style, and the drawings attributed to him in this collection may date previous to that time. But if they do, they must have been the work of a very young man whose work was valueless. Fortuny was heartily ashamed of some of his early productions, and destroyed them as fast as he could gather them in. At the time of his death, for the credit of his name, much of this floating rubbish was collected and burned. Some of it, however, doubtless escaped the scrutiny of his friends.

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HOWEVER much one might doubt the authenticity of some of these water-colors, it is undeniable that many of them show decidedly clever work. I thought that I could detect a certain uniformity in handling in the specimens of the Spanish and Italian schools which suggested the idea that some capable but obscure artist might have had a hand in them. There are scores of poor artists in London, Paris, and Rome capable of making better drawings. In this country the only aquarellists who could do it are men far too honorable to engage in such work. But Mr. Fanning and Mr. Frost, I think, will bear me out in the belief that some clever imitations of well-known oil-paintings used to be turned out with rare industry and despatch from a building not far from Broadway and Exchange Place. We have not yet reached the point in this country of being able to do so well with water-colors.

MONTEZUMA.